

4. Cultural & Historic Resources

INTRODUCTION

Historic resources include any physical remnant of a community's past. In Westford, they include artifacts and records associated with the town's agricultural, industrial, educational, and recreational past. Industrial villages, mill buildings, workers' housing, dams and ponds document Westford's manufacturing legacy, while barns, stone walls and scenic fields provide a glimpse into what once was the town's dominant economy: farming.



Historic workers' housing, Orchard Street, Forge Village.

Granite arched bridges, walls and buildings, together with remnants of working quarries, attest to the significant role that granite played in defining Westford's identity. Town records dating from the town's formation in 1729 document Westford's history and provide valuable resource material for local historians and genealogists. In addition, historic school buildings continue to serve the public, albeit in different ways, and Westford's early twentieth century summer cottages and bungalows around the lakes and ponds contribute to the unique identity of their neighborhoods. Other resources that portray Westford's rural past include its historic bridges and cemeteries, and scenic roads. These resources play a vital role in defining Westford's sense of place and provide residents with a tangible link to the town's past.

Wherever one travels in Westford, the town's deep appreciation for its historic assets is very obvious. Exquisitely preserved historic homes are located throughout town, surrounding the town common, overlooking the mill ponds in Westford's industrial villages, and standing alongside scenic roadways. Impressive masonry mill buildings still stand proudly over their associated villages, and Westford is committed to restoring them as community landmarks. The town also has a successful history of adapting its historic buildings when they became obsolete for their original uses. Most impressive is the fact that many public buildings continue to serve the community. These success stories should inspire the town as it tackles perhaps one of its most difficult challenges: the future of its historic town hall.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

The Villages

Westford developed as a series of individual villages surrounded by large amounts of undeveloped land. The building fabric of each village is unique. Westford's villages evolved in association with different aspects of the town's history: mill construction along a water source; seasonal recreation on the lakes and ponds; transportation patterns; and agricultural development. Today, the villages are not as clearly defined as they once were because much of the surrounding land has been subdivided. However, they still contribute significantly to Westford's visual identity. Westford has six historic villages and all but one (Nabnasset) are listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places. The National Register villages are identified with street signage at their entrances.¹

- ◆ **Brookside Village** is Westford's smallest mill village. Anchored by the Brookside Mill overlooking the Stony Brook River, this village has mill workers' housing along Brookside and Moore Roads and Coolidge Avenue, including a series of almost identical Queen Style style homes lining Brookside Road. Portions of the original mill building have been restored and additions constructed for residential units. The mill's granite dam and adjoining granite arched bridge are also preserved intact and contribute to the village's rural industrial character.
- ◆ **Forge Village** is the largest and best preserved of Westford's factory villages, with the Abbot Worsted Company Mill and Abbot Mill tower dominating its landscape. Located along the northern edge of Forge Pond, the mill harnessed its power from the Stony Brook, which continues to run through the village. Initially developed during the Colonial period (ca. 1730) around a grist mill, this village evolved with subsequent industrial endeavors, including an iron forge and worsted mill. Today, the village includes a well-preserved collection of workers'

housing in a variety of styles and types dating from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, and several well-preserved Federal style homes on Pleasant Street. The town has undertaken recent streetscape and infrastructure improvements in the village, including brick walks and granite curbing on Pleasant Street and a new bridge in 2005.

- ◆ **Graniteville** is located just east of Forge Village on the Stony Brook. Initially, this village developed around machinery manufacturing, then granite quarrying and later, wool production. Graniteville is not as large or as densely developed as Forge Village. Graniteville is not as large or as densely developed as Forge Village. At the center of the village is the C.G. Sargent Machine Shop (1877). The village also includes small-scale commercial buildings, a church, and a school. Residential buildings, most dating from the mid-nineteenth century to mid-twentieth century, include one- and two-family mill workers' housing as well as several larger, architecturally significant homes on spacious lots on the west side of North Main Street, built for mill managers and owners. The remains of a foundry are also located in Graniteville.
- ◆ **Nabnasset**, also known historically as Schlusemeyer land, is a densely settled summer cottage community around Nabnasset Lake. The neighborhood was initially conceived as a marketing promotion when a grocery store gave away deeds to small parcels of land (20' x 25') in coffee cans.² The homes in the village are characterized by their modest scale and appearance, primarily single-story cottages and bungalows with minimal architectural embellishment. Today, most of these homes have been renovated for year-round use. Many have been enlarged with additions and alterations, and several were demolished to make way for larger homes. While the small scale of Nabnasset's historic structures limit contemporary living standards, continued altering of these homes will eventually change

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all historical information presented here is based on the National Register Nominations completed for each village.

² Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, *Westford Reconnaissance Report: Freedom's Way Heritage Landscape Inventory* (2006), 20.



Historic Graniteville.

the historic character of the entire neighborhood.

- ◆ **Parker Village** in the southern section of town is a remnant of Westford's agricultural past. This village developed as both a wayside station along the roadway from Vermont to Boston and as a center for agricultural settlement. The village is defined by its linear development along Concord Road and its expansive fields, stone walls, and scenic views, the restored Parkerville Schoolhouse and a well-preserved collection of historic farmhouses and agricultural outbuildings.
- ◆ **Westford Center** is located at the geographic center of Westford at the juncture of Boston Road and Main Street. It serves as the primary civic and cultural center of town. Westford Town Hall, the J. V. Fletcher Library and the Fire Station are located here around a landscaped green, along with three renovated historic buildings: the Roudenbush Community Center, the Westford Museum, and the Parish Center for the Arts. The village contains an exception-

ally well-preserved collection of nineteenth and early twentieth century houses, many with associated outbuildings such as carriage houses and barns. In the heart of the village lies the Common, a large triangular green established in 1723 and redesigned in 1919 by landscape architect Bremer Pond.

Historic Buildings

Westford has an impressive and well-preserved collection of historic buildings throughout the town. They represent more than three centuries of development, from Westford's initial European settlement in the seventeenth century through its industrial development in the nineteenth century and its twentieth-century evolution into suburb. It is important to remember that Westford's historic buildings include not only historic homes, but also mill buildings, institutional and religious structures, and outbuildings such as barns and carriage houses. These buildings define Westford's built environment today and provide a visual link to its past. Previous historic resource inventory efforts have concentrated primarily on documenting the town's historic residential, industrial and institutional buildings

within the villages of Brookside, Graniteville, Forge Village, Parker Village and Westford Center. Most of Westford's historic buildings are privately owned, but several are in public and non-profit ownership. For the most part, historic buildings owned by the town are located within the National Register Districts.

Westford's architectural collection includes many of the popular styles of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries: the Federal and Greek Revival styles popular during the early eighteenth century, the Second Empire and Italianate styles fashionable in the mid-nineteenth century; the Queen Anne and Shingle Styles popular during the late nineteenth century; and the Colonial Revival style of the early twentieth century. These styles were applied not only to historic homes, but also to mill buildings and religious, educational and civic structures. Today, many of these buildings are well-preserved, exhibiting the hallmark details that characterize their respective styles – from the austere and symmetrical design of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century to the exuberant architectural trim of the late-nineteenth century Victorian era. These historic buildings contribute significantly to Westford's visual character and provide visual documentation of its pattern of growth over time.

RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

Westford's oldest residences are geographically dispersed throughout the town and convey its agrarian past. Many Federal and Greek Revival style homes still retain typical characteristics of early farm houses, with large barns and associated agricultural land. Westford's later residences were designed in the architectural styles of the mid- and late -1800s, such as the Italianate, Second Empire, Queen Anne, Shingle Style and Colonial and English Revival styles. Examples of these styles can be seen in all of Westford's residential neighborhoods and have been applied to single-family homes as well as multi-family workers' housing near the mills. Each village exhibits a unique scale of housing. For example, residences in Westford Center include several high-style examples of Federal (1780-1810), late Italianate (1870s), Queen Anne/Tudor (ca. 1890-1905), and Colonial Revival (ca. 1900-1910) buildings as well as simpler examples at the village's pe-

riphery. Nabnasset homes include small bungalows and some rustic seasonal cabins, while farm houses with adjoining barns and outbuildings define the landscape in Parker Village.

Clusters of workers' housing contribute to the character of Westford's mill villages, Brookside, Forge Village and Graniteville. Workers' housing was constructed by mill owners within walking distance to the mills, and included single- and multi-family structures. These homes were typically defined by their small scale and dense lots, and similar homes were often repeated on a single street. Westford's earliest examples of this type of housing (1870s-1880s) are located in Graniteville and Forge Village and include several building types and styles, primarily with side hall plans and central chimneys as well as a small number of Italianate style row-houses and double houses. Later examples (1890s-1910) include a smaller number of side-hall houses with simple Queen Anne style details. Colonial Revival style double houses and some four-family row houses (ca. 1915-25) are located in both Graniteville and Forge Village. Today, one of the most striking attributes of Westford's workers' housing is the repetition of housing forms and styles on single streets within the mill villages.

INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS

Westford's mill villages are defined by their respective mills, each different in form, style and materials. While these buildings no longer serve their original manufacturing uses, they remain important visual landmarks. Future restoration and reuse of the mills in Forge Village and Graniteville would help significantly to revitalize these villages.

- ◆ **Brookside Mill** at 8 Brookside Road is a small granite and brick mill complex directly adjacent to Stony Brook. The mill was renovated into housing units in the 1990s, including its original granite section (ca.1862) and later brick sections (1895). Today, the mill has a distinctly residential appearance although the elevation facing Brookside Road has been preserved relatively intact. To date, this is the only mill in Westford that has been renovated. Other historic features of this complex include the mill pond, granite dam and granite single arch bridge.

- ◆ **Abbot Mill Complex** in Forge Village is a brick mill complex with two and three-story brick buildings constructed in 1887 and enlarged in 1910. The Town approved a redevelopment and rehabilitation development plan in 2005 with selective demolition and interior renovation. The owner has begun preliminary work on the site for hazardous waste removal.
- ◆ **Abbot Worsted Yarn Company Mill** and **C. G. Sargent Machine Shop Complex** in Graniteville is an expansive, two-story Italianate style granite mill complex built during the mid-nineteenth century. The most distinctive building in the complex, Granite Mill #1 on Broadway, was constructed along the Stony Brook in 1877. This portion of the mill is partially occupied with a variety of tenants while other sections remain vacant. The entire complex has been on the market for several years.



Westford Center historic buildings, clockwise from left: Parish Center for the Arts, Westford Town Hall, and J. V. Fletcher Library.

CIVIC BUILDINGS

Most of Westford's historically significant civic buildings are located in Westford Center.³ These well-preserved buildings include:

- ◆ **Westford Town Hall**, constructed in 1870 in the Second Empire style. This two and one-half story building has an impressive façade with a pedimented front gable intersected by a three-story tower. The building's original Second Empire tower was destroyed in the 1938 hurricane and a Colonial Revival tower was added at that time. While an addition was added to the building at the rear, the main historic building has been well-maintained, with minimal alterations. Recently Westford Town Hall was deemed structurally unstable by the building inspector, who revoked the certificate of occupancy and ordered the building to be vacated. The future of Town Hall remains unclear as the town con-

tinues to evaluate restoration costs. The building is located within the Westford Center National Register District.

- ◆ The **J. V. Fletcher Library** was built in 1895-96 in the Romanesque Revival style, with later additions and renovations in 1963, 1969 and 1987. The brick building is defined by its distinctive terra cotta and granite arched entrance, decorative copper and stone cornice trim and slate hipped roof. Two identical additions were added to each side of the building, replicating its original brick exterior. The library trustees recently completed restoration work on the main entrance, and they expect to apply for a state library construction grant to expand the building when a new funding round becomes available. Also located with the Westford Center National Register District, the library and is the only building in the district built completely of brick.

³ Information from *National Register Report, Westford Center Historic District*, 1998.

Other municipally owned properties with historic significance include:

- ◆ The **Old Town Farm**, 35 Town Farm Road. The town poor farm was established in 1824 when Westford purchased the farm of John Read. A two-story, late Federal style brick Poor House was built on the land in 1837 and a new barn was built in 1858.⁴ The building was recently improved, and the Westford Parks and Recreation Department occupies it for offices and community space. Westford has approved Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds to replace the building's roof. The property was listed on the National Register in 2008.
- ◆ **East Boston Camps (EBC)**. In 1937, Isabel and Sarah Hyams founded a "Fresh Air Camp" on land between Stony Brook and Keyes Brook for East Boston area children to escape tuberculosis. Two sawmills were set up on the land and cabins were constructed with lumber from the site. The town purchased the 286-acre property in 2005 and allowed the East Boston Social Centers, Inc. to continue to run camp programs there through 2007.⁵ Westford town has completed a master plan for the EBC property and is currently trying to determine who will run programs at the site in the future. While natural resource protection is a primary concern, the EBC has historically significant camp structures on the property, including a series of one-story hipped roof camp cottages with distinctive horizontal siding. The master plan recommended retaining these buildings.⁶



Roundebush Community Center.

SCHOOLS

During the 1700s and 1800s, schoolhouses were built to serve each district of Westford. By about 1870, the town had ten district schoolhouses. Today, nine of the original schoolhouses remain, but most have been renovated into private homes. One of the historic schoolhouses, the 1880 Parkerville Schoolhouse, is now a museum. In 2003, the District #4 Schoolhouse, Nashoba, was demolished for construction of a new house.⁷

Several larger schools were built in Westford's villages, including Queen Anne style schools in Graniteville (Sargent School, 1884), Westford Center (Frost School, 1908), and Forge Village, (Cameron School, 1872, remodeled in 1908 in the Colonial Revival style). All of these buildings have been renovated and today, they support different uses. For example, the Cameron School at 20 Pleasant Street serves as the Cameron Senior Center and headquarters of the Council on Aging while the Frost School at 73 Main Street is occupied by the Roundebush Community Center, Inc. The town still owns the Frost School and the non-profit organization maintains it. The Community Center has demonstrated a strong commitment to preserving the three historic buildings it uses for community programs, including the Frost School, the second Westford Academy Building at 65 Main Street (see below) and the Old

⁴ Town of Westford Cultural Resource Inventory.

⁵ *Town of Westford East Boston Camps Master Plan*, 2007

⁶ The Master Plan does, however, mention several other buildings to be demolished. It is unclear whether these buildings have historic significance and whether they would be reviewed under the demolition delay ordinance.

⁷ "Our Community Today," *Westford Historic Preservation Plan* (Draft), February 16, 2007.

Nab (1922) in Nabnasset Village. During the 1990s, the organization spent more than \$850,000 on repairing, improving and maintaining these facilities.⁸

Although Westford Academy is the town's public high school today, it was incorporated as a private school in 1792 and constructed two important buildings in Westford Center. In 1793, Westford Academy constructed a two-story, late Georgian style school to the west of the Common and remained there until 1897, when the Academy moved into a new, larger school at 65 Main Street. In 1910, the original building was moved to its present location on Boston Road and converted to a fire station. The town used it for this purpose until the present Central Fire Station was completed in 1974. Today, the Westford Historical Society operates Westford Museum in the first Westford Academy building.⁹ The second school at 65 Main Street, built in the late Victorian Richardsonian Romanesque style, is one of Westford's most elaborately embellished buildings, now occupied by the Roudenbush Community Center.



Westford Museum.

MUSEUMS

Westford has two operating museums:

- ◆ In 1983, the Westford Historical Society opened **Westford Museum** in the former 1793 Westford Academy Building. The building is owned by the town and maintained by the Historical Society, which houses its collection of historic Westford artifacts here. The Museum includes an adjacent house with staff office and research materials, but the historic Westford Academy building serves as the primary museum, with both permanent and revolving display space. The Society also hosts lectures, music programs and public events in this facility.
- ◆ The **Parkerville Schoolhouse** (1880) at the corner of Concord and Carlisle Roads in Parker Village opened as a living history museum in the early 1990s. Although the town retains ownership of this one-room schoolhouse as well, the building is managed and maintained by a non-profit organization, Friends of the Parkerville School. The first Parkerville School was constructed in 1874, but it was destroyed by a fire in 1880. Later that year, the town rebuilt the schoolhouse and operated a school in it until 1929. Thereafter, the schoolhouse was used as a social club until 1989, when inquiries were made to renovate the building into a residence. At that point, the Friends formed to restore the building and maintain the schoolhouse as a living history museum for local schoolchildren as well as a local event venue. The Friends have undertaken system and access improvements

⁸ Retrieved from Roudenbush Community Center, <www.roudenbush.org>.

⁹ Westford Historical Society, *Westford Museum & Historical Society* (pamphlet).

to the building and have completed site maintenance and landscape improvements.¹⁰

CHURCHES

Westford is home to several historically significant churches that still serve their ecclesiastical purpose.¹¹ These churches are generally well preserved and have been surveyed as part of the town's cultural resource inventory. Each parish has an extensive website with historical information.

- ◆ The **First Parish Church** (1794, renovated in 1868) is located at 48 Main Street in Westford Center. This Georgian style wood-frame structure with its distinctive three-story tower is well-preserved and contributes significantly to the overall New England village appeal of Westford Center. An adjacent parish hall was constructed in 1996 that detracts somewhat from the historic church building, but the First Parish remains one of Westford's most historically significant architectural resources.¹²
- ◆ **Saint Catherine's Roman Catholic Church** (1934) and Rectory (1927) is located on 107 North Main Street between Graniteville and Forge Village. This modest brick church with its steeply pitched roof and extensive landscaped grounds continues to serve both villages.
- ◆ The **Westford Methodist Church** (1871) at 10 Church Street in Graniteville was constructed on land donated by Charles G. Sargent, who founded the Sargent Machine Shop and co-founded the Abbot Worsted Company. According to the parish's website, it recently undertook a capital improvements campaign (2000) to renovate and enlarge the church. The website also includes a brochure for prospective tenants to lease an unused portion of the building.

Another historically significant church building has been adapted from its original religious use into a civic purpose. The historic Congregational Church (1829; remodeled 1896) at 10 Lincoln Street in Westford Center is a two-story, wood-frame building renovated in the Late Victorian style.¹³ After the church was deconsecrated in the mid-twentieth century, it became a parish hall for the First Parish Church on Main Street. When the First Parish Church constructed a new parish hall (see above), the Congregational Church building was left vacant. In 1998, the Westford Historical Society purchased the church building and restored its Victorian details. It is now occupied by the **Parish Center for the Arts**, a private, non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of cultural arts.¹⁴

Historic Farms

Agriculture played a pivotal role in Westford's early economy and remained important through World War II. Dairy farming was the predominant agricultural pursuit, although local orchards producing apples and peaches also prospered in Westford. The loss of active farming and the development of agricultural land were cited as the most important landscape issues raised by Westford residents during the planning process for the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program in 2006.¹⁵ Today, Westford's remaining farms provide some of the town's most magnificent scenic vistas and contribute to its visual character. The historic farm houses and outbuildings provide a tangible link to the past, even where the agricultural land has been lost. At least one farm has been placed under an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR), but while this designation protects the agricultural landscape, it does not provide permanent protection for the farm structures. Many of the town's residential farm buildings have been preserved through private efforts, but there are no

¹⁰ Retrieved from *Westford Web*, <<http://www.westford.com/parkerville/about>>.

¹¹ Historic information gathered from the town's historic inventory data and church websites.

¹² *National Register Report, Westford Center Historic District*, 1998.

¹³ This building is also known as the First Parish Church, as it once served as the parish hall for the First Parish Church between the 1950's until 1996.

¹⁴ Retrieved from *Westford Web*, <<http://www.westford.com/museum>>, <<http://www.westford.com/pca>>

¹⁵ Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Conservation and Recreation, Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Program, *Westford Reconnaissance Report*, June 2006.

permanent restrictions in place to ensure their future preservation.

As Westford continues its suburban evolution, the physical components of its early farmsteads will remain threatened by new development. The loss of agricultural outbuildings will permanently alter the landscape and begin to eclipse the visual qualities of “place” that make Westford special. While new development often preserves and reuses agricultural residences during redevelopment, the farm’s outbuildings are often demolished. Still, Westford does have some examples of historic agricultural preservation efforts:

- ◆ **Gould Picking Farm**, the historic Meadow Brook Farm on Groton Road, was saved from development through the cooperative efforts of private individuals and the town. Most of the farm’s historic structures remain with only minor modifications. The town owns portions of the farmland, and an APR protects the privately owned land from future development. There are no preservation restrictions recorded for the historic buildings, however. The views of this property from Groton Road, with its rolling fields and open pasture, provide some of Westford’s most spectacular vistas and a visual respite from the contemporary development that has occurred elsewhere in the same area.
- ◆ **Hill Orchard** is one of the last working orchards in Westford. The town purchased the 22-acre orchard on the corner of Hunt and Chamberlain Roads in 1999 and contracts with a private individual to operate the orchard and farm stand, thereby ensuring that Westford’s orchard legacy will be preserved. This property also includes the remnants of a roadway that once led to Schoolhouse #2 on Stony Brook Road and beyond to Groton.
- ◎ Two early farmstead homes on Concord Road in Parker Village, the **Henry Fletcher House** (1810) and Barn at 224 Concord Road and the **John Proctor House** (1730) at 218 Concord Road, are protected with preservation restrictions under M.G.L. c. 184, ss. 31-33. A preserva-

tion restriction runs with the deed and is one of the strongest preservation strategies available. All properties with preservation restrictions filed under state law are automatically listed in the State Register. These two properties are also individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

OUTBUILDINGS

Westford’s old barns are local landmarks that serve as a visual reminder of the town’s agrarian past. While most of the historic farmhouses are well-preserved, the same cannot be said for some of its remaining barns. Barns still used for agricultural purposes or adapted for new uses appear to be in relatively sound condition. However, many of the vacant or unused barns show evidence of deterioration. Westford does not have a complete inventory of its historic barns and related agrarian outbuildings. The Historical Commission recently worked with the owner of the Reid Barn to save the structure from demolition. The barn was relocated from 145 Littleton Road to 129 Littleton Road and preserved as part of a local retail business. The Historical Commission has received requests over the past several years from local property owners seeking financial assistance to preserve their historic barns.

Westford also has many mid- to late-nineteenth century residential and industrial-related barns or carriage houses. Many are attached to houses, as was a common building practice throughout New England during the nineteenth century. Well-preserved examples of these outbuildings can be seen adjoining some of the houses in Westford Center. Other outbuildings include agriculturally-related structures. The Westford Historical Commission has documented the historic significance of the stone grain silo at 47 Acton Road, which is believed to date to the early twentieth century.

Scenic Roads, Cart Paths and Stone Walls

Westford’s historic transportation route patterns still exist and they provide one of the most influential elements of its rural form. Most of these early roads maintain their rural character, with narrow pave-

ment, winding routes, and adjoining mature trees and vegetation. They also provide views to scenic rural vistas and open fields. Stone walls line many of these rural roads and delineate the boundaries of former farm fields. Recognizing the importance and vulnerability of its historic roadways, Westford adopted the provisions of M.G.L. c. 40, s.15C, the Scenic Roads Act, and approved a Scenic Roads Bylaw in 1975. Initially, the town designated four roads under this bylaw. Since then, town meeting has designated an additional six roads as scenic roads. The Westford Historical Commission has placed signs at the entrances to each scenic roadway.

Westford also has a number of remnants of early roadways that have since been abandoned. For example, a cart path near Boutwell Brook, bounded by two stone walls, is used now as a trail. A path near Cider Mill Pond, defined by double stone walls, is a remnant of the former main road to Chelmsford, discontinued in 1866 and now protected by an easement. Part of the path is owned by the town, although the center portion is privately owned.¹⁶ The cart path between Graniteville Road and Forge Village Road is protected as part of the Tom Paul Trail and also bordered by two stone walls.

Stone walls supply physical evidence of a town's agrarian heritage. They delineate the historic development pattern of land ownership and agricultural use. In Westford, stone walls can be found throughout the town along and within now-forested land, along its scenic roadways and bordering the perimeter of its remaining farmland and open space. Deferred maintenance and natural erosion have caused many of these dry-laid stone walls to deteriorate. Westford does not have an inventory of its stone walls, but some notable examples include the walls along Hildreth Street, a designated scenic road. Zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations often provide little protection for stone walls during development. However, Westford's Scenic Roads Bylaw provides some degree of protection for stone walls and significant trees within the public right-of-way of designated roads.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Historic Structures

Westford was once home to a network of rail services, including the Stony Brook Railroad from Lowell to Ayer and the Nashua, Acton & Boston Railroad. By the 1930s, the town's streetcar and railway lines were all but abandoned in response to the automobile. While only one of the original train depots still stands, the legacy of the railways remains in Westford's historic railroad bridges and rail path remnants. Westford has several historically significant bridges and they are remarkably well-preserved. While many of the Commonwealth's historic bridges have been replaced by modern structures, Westford's transportation routes still have the bridge scale and massing characteristics of rural areas. Many of the town's historic bridges were constructed from local granite and display significant engineering expertise. Only one is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Stony Brook Road Bridge is located on one of Westford's designated scenic roads. This double arched bridge adjacent to the Brookside Mill is constructed of granite blocks and located within the Brookside National Register District. Other stone arch bridges include one on Nutting Road, constructed over the trolley line near East Boston Camps. A stone lintel bridge off Rome Drive is part of a trail through protected conservation land. Westford's most significant granite bridge is the Old Arch Bridge on the former Red Line, an abandoned railroad right-of-way converted to a trail. The Old Arch Bridge is listed by the U. S. Department of the Interior as one of the most important engineering landmarks in the Merrimack Valley. Built in 1872 as part of the Nashua, Acton & Boston Railroad, this granite block bridge was built without mortar in a single arch spanning 60 feet. The bridge is managed by the Westford Conservation Commission. In the late 1970s, aesthetic improvements and erosion control measures were taken to protect the bridge and the adjoining public trail and conservation land.

Historic Objects

The Roudenbush Map of Westford identifies a number of historic objects and markers. These objects include markers at the original site of the Abbot Worsted Company on North Main Street and the



Stony Brook Bridge.

Colonel John Robinson homestead site on Robinson Road. War Memorials are located on Westford Common and North Main Street in Forge Village. Perhaps the most intriguing object is the Westford Knight on Depot Street. This stone is believed to be a grave marker for one of the first Europeans to reach Westford as part of an expedition led by Prince Henry Sinclair, of Scotland. The voyage would have reached the New World in 1399 A.D. The carvings can be seen as a picture of a knight, complete with sword.¹⁷ Another object believed to date to Sinclair's journey is the Boat Stone, which is now stored in the J.V. Fletcher Library. This oval shaped stone has an image of a fourteenth century sailing ship carved into its surface.

Burial Grounds and Cemeteries

Westford has eight cemeteries, five of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.¹⁸ Six of the cemeteries are maintained by the town, including:

- ◆ **Fairview Cemetery** (est. 1702) on Main Street and Tadmuck Road;

¹⁷ Retrieved from *Westford Web*, <<http://www.westford.com/museum/knight>>

¹⁸ Roudenbush Map of Westford.

- ◆ **Hillside Cemetery** (est. 1753 as a family cemetery) on Depot Street, also known as North Burying Ground;
- ◆ **Pioneer Cemetery** (est. 1750) on Carlisle Road, also known as Old Pioneer Burial Ground, where the last indigenous Native American from Westford is reportedly buried;
- ◆ **Pine Grove Cemetery** on Forge Village Road;
- ◆ **Westlawn Cemetery** (est. 1760) on Concord Road, also known as West Burying Ground; and
- ◆ **Wright Cemetery** (est. 1819) on Groton Road, the original family plot for the Wright family and descendants, continues to be owned by the family but the Town maintains the grounds.

The Westford Parks and Grounds Department oversees maintenance of these cemeteries. In 2005, the department received CPA funds to restore slate grave markers in the Fairview and Westlawn Cemeteries. The work included installing new footings for approximately 20 stones.

Westford also has two privately owned and maintained cemeteries: **Russian Cemetery** (est. 1918) on Patten Road, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places; and **St. Catherine's Cemetery** on Pine Ridge Road. Westford's cemeteries are generally well-preserved with impressive early gravestone carvings.

In 1907, a local resident copied epitaphs from many of Westford's cemeteries and compiled them in *Epitaphs from Grave Yard Records, Westford, Massachusetts*. A local student also compiled a list of names and dates from the Westlawn Cemetery/West Burial Ground (1968). Recently, these cemetery data sources were consolidated and a local resident re-inventoried Westlawn Cemetery, identifying each stone's location, additional personal information, condition of stone, and stone carver's name when known. The inventory includes all of the cemetery's gravestones, even more recent markers.¹⁹

Quarries

Quarrying began in Westford at Graniteville in 1826, although granite had been taken previously from the large surface boulders scattered over the northern part of the town. By 1900, granite had become an important part of Westford's industrial base. Today, the former quarries are scattered throughout Westford's hills and are largely unprotected. Most are small, inactive and inaccessible, but they are significant for their artifacts, which reflect the historic development of the quarry. Many of the smaller quarry ponds now provide important vernal pool habitats. Some of the most significant quarries sit atop and around Snake Meadow Hill and several are included within the Graniteville National Register Historic District. Remnants from one quarry were integrated into the design of the Villages at Stone Ridge residential development. Future preservation of the town's quarries is complicated. In the *Westford Reconnaissance Report: Freedom's Way Heritage Landscape Inventory* (2006), the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) identified the quarries as a critical concern for the need to preserve their historical legacy while addressing public safety concerns.

Archaeological Resources

Westford has one documented ancient Native American site of unknown date and three documented historic archaeological sites. According to DCR, this level of documentation is extremely low and Westford probably has far more archaeology potential.²⁰ Westford has not completed a town-wide archaeological survey, nor has it included archaeological sites within its existing historic resources inventory. The Westford Historical Commission recognizes that significant sites could exist within the town and recently received CPA funds for a comprehensive archaeological survey.

In the past, a number of archaeological reconnaissance surveys have been completed in various locations in response to development proposals, including Summer Village on Long Sought For Pond. Any significant archaeological sites identified in Westford will be included in the MHC Inventory of Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth. This confidential inventory contains sensitive information and is not a public record under state law. All archaeological site information should be kept in a secure location with restricted access such as a new Town Archives Center.

Heritage Landscapes

Westford is a tapestry of both natural and heritage landscapes that contribute to its scenic quality. The town's natural landscapes are important not only for their environmental significance, but also as a context and setting for most of Westford's historic built assets. Westford's heritage landscapes, which were created by human interaction with the land, include the industrial landscapes of Westford's mill villages and their associated mill ponds and dams. The town's historic railroad lines also contribute to some of its most impressive landscapes, including the remnants of the Boston and Maine Railroad and the Red Line. In addition, the Westford Town Common represents the quintessential rural town green. These heritage landscapes are highlighted in DCR's *Westford Reconnaissance Report*. Westford's heritage landscapes should be documented as a

¹⁹ *Westford Museum Musings*, "List of Those Buried in the West Burial Ground," (Fall 2006).

²⁰ *Westford Reconnaissance Report* (2006), 9.

component of the town's comprehensive cultural resource inventory.

PRESERVATION PLANNING IN WESTFORD

Local Preservation Capacity

Westford has several municipal and private non-profit organizations engaged in the preservation and advocacy of historic and cultural resources. Several groups work town-wide while others focus on specific properties. Town boards such as the Planning Board and Conservation Commission have worked collaboratively to preserve Westford's rural character. Westford's three most active preservation organizations, the Westford Historical Commission, the Westford Historical Society, and the Records and Archives Management Committee have worked collaboratively to promote historic preservation, although their missions differ somewhat.

The **Westford Historical Commission** is a municipal board chartered with the preservation, protection and development of the historical and archaeological assets of the town. Created by town meeting in 1975, this group is involved in preservation advocacy and planning initiatives, including Westford's demolition delay bylaw, the scenic roads bylaw, historic resource surveys, and National Register of Historic Places nominations. The Historical Commission serves as the budget manager for the use of town funds in support of the Westford Cottage and Westford Museum buildings. The Historical Commission has placed signage at each National Register historic district and on each of the town's scenic roads. The Commission has no staff.

The **Westford Historical Society, Inc.** is a private non-profit 501(c) (3) corporation that operates the Westford Museum with paid part-time staff and an active board and volunteers. The Society owns and maintains a collection of town artifacts that are exhibited in the Museum, including nineteenth century medical supplies, a country store and information about the Westford Knight, Westford's historic mills and Westford's granite industry. In addition, the Society owns a repository of local genealogical records, house and other building histories, and

Westford ephemera and memorabilia, and organizes revolving exhibits, annual events and a monthly lecture series. It recently established the Westford History Research Prize, awarded to a student at the Westford Academy for original research papers on Westford history. The Historical Society owns the Performing Center for the Arts (PCA) building, having raised the funds to purchase it from the First Parish Church United and preserve it as public space.

The **Records & Archives Management Committee** was established in 2002 by the Town Manager and Selectmen to create a records and archives management policy for town records, to find a suitable central location for the safe storage of historical records, and to address other preservation issues for town records. It has developed a records and archives management policy, supported efforts to accession or de-accession town records, worked toward development of an Archives Center for the town, and obtained CPA funds for multiple projects for the preservation of town records and for making town records more accessible to the public.

Identification of significant historic resources through a cultural resource inventory forms the basis of historic preservation planning at the local level. The Westford Historical Commission conducted a historic resources inventory during the 1990s. This effort resulted in the submission of 753 properties into the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth. Original copies of the inventory forms are kept at the Westford Museum and the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC).

Westford's inventory can also be reviewed at MHC's online searchable database, MACRIS. The identified resources date from 1664 to 2000 and they include 587 buildings, 85 objects, 60 structures, 15 areas, and six burial grounds. However, many of the inventory forms do not include secondary features such as out-buildings, stone walls and landscape elements, and the inventory does not include resources throughout the community. The Historical Commission recognizes the limitations of the existing inventory and has begun efforts to undertake additional inventory work with CPA funds. The Records and Archives

TABLE 4.1
NATIONAL REGISTER LISTINGS

Historic Name	Date Listed	No. of Properties
Historic Districts		
Brookside Historic District	January 23, 2003	26 contributing
Forge Village Historic District	May 2, 2002	280 contributing
Graniteville Historic District	January 17, 2002	171 contributing
Parker Village Historic District	December 27, 2002	12 contributing
Westford Center Historic District	August 28, 1998	155 contributing
Individual Listings		
Fairview Cemetery	January 12, 2005	26 contributing
Henry Fletcher House and Barn, 224 Concord Road	September 30, 1993	6
Hillside Cemetery	December 6, 2005	36 contributing
John Proctor House, 218 Concord Road	February 4, 1993	3
Russian Cemetery	November 25, 2005	20 contributing
Westford Town Farm	March 13, 2008	1
Westlawn Cemetery	January 5, 2005	18 contributing
Wright Cemetery	December 6, 2005	9 contributing

Source: Massachusetts Historical Commission.

Management Committee has focused on the preliminary steps necessary to develop a town Archives Center for the preservation, storage, and controlled access of the town's numerous permanent records.

National Register of Historic Places

Westford has five National Register Districts and eight properties listed individually on the National Register (Table 4.1). Two of the individual listings (Henry Fletcher House and John Proctor House) were initiated by the property owners, who also placed preservation restrictions on the properties.

Local Efforts to Protect Historic Resources

Guided by recommendations in previous plans, Westford has worked to preserve historic resources by enacting bylaws and funding mechanisms. Westford adopted the CPA in 2001 with a three percent surcharge on local tax bills. Westford's CPA-funded historic preservation activities have included preserving historic town documents, renovating the exterior of the Roudenbush Community Center, repairing the roof at the Old Town Farm, restoration of the Fletcher Library, and carrying out preservation planning activities such as a town-wide

archaeological survey and a conservation survey of historic bound volumes in the Town Clerks office.

Demolition Delay. In 1997, Westford adopted a demolition delay bylaw that allows the Historical Commission to stay for six months the demolition of structures determined to be both historically significant and preferably preserved. Prior to 1988, Westford lost at least 29 historic properties. While some were destroyed by fire, most were demolished for new development, including train depots, houses and a blacksmith shop at Chamberlain's Corner. Through the demolition delay bylaw, the Historic Commission has helped to save several historically significant resources, including a granite carved marker at Gould Farm with date, apple and arrow; the United Methodist Church's original parsonage on Church Street, which was moved to River Street in 2002; and the Reid Barn, 145 Littleton Road, which was moved to 129 Littleton Road in 2003.

A demolition delay bylaw does not guarantee that historic buildings will be saved. Since the bylaw was passed, many structures have ultimately been demolished after the delay period expired, including Schoolhouse No. 4, formerly located at 1 Lane's End.²¹ Communities throughout state are discov-

²¹ Demolition and demolition delay information detailed in "Our Community Today" *Westford Historic*

ering that a one-year delay is more effective at encouraging rehabilitation options beyond demolition.

Scenic Roads. Westford's Scenic Roads Bylaw requires a review process by the Planning Board for the removal of trees and stone walls within the public right-of-way on designated roads. However, the source of authority for Westford's local bylaw, the Scenic Roads Act, does not protect features outside the right of way, such as stone walls or views across open fields. Only ten roads have been designated as scenic roads since 1995: Hildreth Street, Old Lowell Road, Old Road, Vose Road, Gould Road, Leland Road, Stony Brook Road, Chamberlain Road, Hunt Road, and Frances Hill Road.



Scenic roadway and stone walls.

Mill Conversion. Westford has a Mill Conversion Overlay District that includes the four historic mill complexes: Abbot Mill in Forge Village, the Abbot Worsted Mill and Sargent Machine Shop in Graniteville, and the Brookside Mill in Brookside Village. The bylaw's purpose is to encourage the preservation, reuse and renovation of historic mills while preserving neighborhood character. The bylaw requires redevelopment proposals to comply with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and directs applicants to consult with the Westford Historical Commission during the planning process. Any expansion of the existing buildings or new construction must be consistent with the historic character, architectural style and scale of the existing mill structures.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

Westford values its historic resources. The town has approved several preservation-based bylaws, and

while the bylaws provide fairly limited protection, they express Westford's appreciation of its historic character and create some initial steps toward resource protection. By adopting the CPA, Westford chose to provide much-needed funding for resource protection. Moreover, many of the recommendations of recent plans have been or are being acted upon by the town. This can be seen in the Historical Commission's work to prepare a town-wide archaeology inventory and update the historic resources inventory, and the Record and Archives Management Committee's recent conservation survey and use of CPA funds for scanning, microfilming, archiving, and otherwise preserving historical town records. However, the preservation of Westford's privately-owned historic resources has been accomplished primarily on a voluntary basis.

Westford has successfully preserved several of its historically significant properties. However, other private and public historical structures need to be preserved. For example, the town is confronted with a structurally deficient Town Hall that is uninhabitable, in addition to several vacant and/or underutilized properties, such as the historic fire stations in Graniteville and Forge Village. Westford is also losing its historical barns and other outbuildings. Westford needs to proceed cautiously with regards to all of these buildings and identify preservation strategies and funding sources that may be available for them. Collaborative efforts between town boards, departments, private property owners and

Preservation Plan DRAFT, 2007. This Plan also includes a detailed list of demolished buildings in Appendix Table 3.

local preservation organizations will be critical in determining the future preservation of these and other historic structures.

National Register Districts are an important preservation tool, but they do not protect privately owned historic buildings from inappropriate alterations. Westford has no legislation in place to prohibit inappropriate alterations to historic buildings. It also provides no incentives to owners to preserve the authenticity of their historic structures. The *Westford Reconnaissance Report* recommends designating Westford Center as a Chapter 40C Local Historic District and designating Forge Village and Graniteville as Architectural Conservation Districts. Westford needs to complete a comprehensive cultural resource inventory. This inventory, in conjunction with a town-wide archaeological inventory, would provide the framework for future preservation activities in the community and serve a variety of town planning purposes, including not only activities of the Westford Historical Commission but also general planning review.

Scenic roads are a critical component of Westford's identity. While it is complicated to balance public safety concerns with the protection of scenic roads, allowing these resources to be altered with modern engineering designs would forever change the retained elements of rural Westford. In addition, the existing scenic road bylaw cannot preserve features on private property due to limited authority under the state Scenic Roads Act. A scenic overlay (zoning) district with a no-disturb buffer along designated roads would be more effective, and it would not prevent property owners from using their land.

The Records and Archives Management Committee was established in 2002 to create a records and archives management policy for town records, to find a suitable central location for the safe storage of historical records, and to address other preservation issues for town records. It has developed a records and archives management policy, supported efforts to accession or de-accession of town records, worked toward development of an Archives Center for the town, and used CPA funds for multiple projects for the preservation of town records and for making town records more accessible to the public. The

Committee has already started to identify, preserve, and archive the town's existing permanent historical records. However, these tasks will need to continue long after the committee's work is completed because more permanent records are generated each year. The town will need to institute procedures to train staff in accessioning, storing, and preserving permanent town records for all town departments, boards, and committees.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

- C.1** Preserve, respect and enhance the historic resources and settings that make Westford visually physically, and historically unique.
- C.2** Protect Westford's historic and architectural heritage by identifying and instituting appropriate, broadly supported methods of historic preservation, including mechanisms for encouraging owner-preservation of existing historic structures.
- C.3** Preserve Westford's cultural heritage by identifying an appropriate location for an Archives Center, building it, and implementing preservation and conservation recommendations to stabilize and preserve Westford's historic records.
- C.4** Establish development review guidelines for preserving and enhancing existing architectural and historic character and resources
- C.5** Encourage new development in or near historical areas to conform to the architectural and historic character and context of Westford's existing buildings.
- C.6** Encourage neighborhoods to propose architectural conservation districts and provide incentives for owners of historic structures to seek alternatives to teardowns and substantial alterations to older historic structures.

- C.7** Promote cultural production and cultural appreciation by supporting media, performing arts, applied arts, visual arts, and literary arts activities that celebrate Westford's heritage, the arts, and life-long learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES TO HIGHLIGHT WESTFORD'S DIVERSE CULTURAL HERITAGE, BOTH PAST AND PRESENT.

- ◆ Complete a comprehensive cultural resource inventory.
- ◆ Promote access to town cultural events.

2. TAKE ADDITIONAL STEPS TO PROTECT SCENIC ROADS.

- ◆ Complete a scenic roads inventory that includes descriptions and photo documentation of each of its scenic roads and identifies the character-defining features that should be preserved.
- ◆ Adopt specific design criteria relating to roadway improvements and alterations, and coordinate these procedures between the Highway Department and the Planning Board. This should include developing policies and standards for public road maintenance and reconstruction, including reconstruction of Westford's historic bridges and roadways over cow passes.

3. EXPAND THE WESTFORD HISTORICAL COMMISSION'S ROLE IN TOWN PLANNING.

- ◆ Serve as a review resource on development proposals affecting historic resources.
- ◆ Encourage historic preservation-minded individuals to serve on review boards
- ◆ Provide a primer on historic preservation to boards and commissions.
- ◆ Enhance the town's existing project review guidelines to include simple historic preserva-

tion checklists (if not already in place), such as protection of stone walls, bridges, foundations, landscapes, structures, archaeological sites, architectural characteristics and guidelines, scenic road preservation, and state and federal preservation guidelines.

- ◆ Establish policies and procedures for immediate notification of the Historic Commission when historic structures and foundations are threatened. Coordinate with Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Conservation Commission to apply these procedures during these Board's respective hearing processes.

4. FOCUS ON CRITICAL AT-RISK PROPERTIES.

- ◆ Create an inventory of historic homes and other buildings that may not lie within current National Register districts.
- ◆ Work with neighborhood groups to encourage pride in ownership of historical property.
- ◆ Create incentives for maintenance and/or improvements to historical structures such as encouraging preservation easements with non-profit organizations to create official protection of structures or have the Historical Commission offer plaques (for a fee) to property owners of historical structures.

5. INCREASE THE TOWN'S CAPACITY TO CARRY OUT PRESERVATION ACTIVITIES.

- ◆ Consider hiring a part-time preservation-planner who could also serve as staff for the Westford Historical Commission.
- ◆ Continue investigating available state matching grant programs from the MHC as well as local CPA funds.
- ◆ Consider collaborating with one or more neighboring towns to establish regional preservation planning capacity, including the possibility of shared staff.

6. CONTINUE THE TOWN'S ACTIVITIES TO PRESERVE AND ARCHIVE ITS PERMANENT HISTORICAL RECORDS.

- ◆ Implement procedures and train appropriate staff members in the accessioning, storing, and preserving permanent historical records for all town departments, boards, and committees.
- ◆ Identify an appropriate location and construct a readily-accessible Archives Center to stabilize and preserve Westford's historic records.

7. SUPPORT THE CULTURAL GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ANNUAL ACTION PLANS OF THE J. V. FLETCHER LIBRARY LONG-RANGE PLAN. *(See also, Facilities and Services, Recommendation #2)*